

NEWS RELEASE



a division of the
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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Colonel Jerry E. Adams, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jefferson City, Missouri

July 4th weekend, traditionally the busiest boating weekend of the year, will be quickly upon us. It's one of the few times a year that many boaters will operate at night and often results in a higher number of accidents, injuries and fatalities than other holidays and weekends. With the 4th on Friday this year, boaters will likely view many fireworks displays from the water. Afterwards, some boaters may feel the urge to rush home. This is the worst thing you can do. Take your time going to and from your boating destination, travel at a reasonable speed and have life jackets on. Also, prepare your equipment before you leave for the waterways by first ensuring that all navigation lights operate, fuel is topped off and battery loads are monitored. For those trailering their boats, ensure tires are inflated properly and bearings are not damaged. Also, have a complete spare tire inflated on the rim available. Keep an eye on your electrical usage when anchored. Avoid the temptation to run fans, sound systems and other appliances while waiting on the fireworks displays.

Increased boating activity, inexperience and alcohol all play a major role in boating safety. The Water Patrol will be working extended shifts and targeting areas where violations result in higher risk of accident involvement. The risk of being involved in an accident cannot be completely alleviated but can be reduced by using good judgement, courtesy, common sense and knowledge of the laws. Colonel Jerry Adams, Commissioner of the Missouri State Water Patrol, encourages all boaters to recognize that operator controlled factors such as speed, recklessness and impaired operation can be deadly combinations.

Here are a few safety tips.

1. Wear a life jacket. Approximately 80% of the victims in fatal boating accidents aren't wearing life jackets.
2. Don't drink and boat. Up to 50% of fatal boating accidents involve alcohol use.
3. Watch your speed. With increased speed comes less reaction time when confronted with near miss/hit situations.
4. Attach your emergency ignition safety switch lanyard to yourself in the event of a fall overboard. This will shut the engine off and prevent the vessel from circling back on you.
5. Avoid congested areas and don't jump wakes.
6. Keep a sharp lookout and steer well clear of other craft.
7. Don't overload your boat.
8. Know before you go. Operators should be familiar with the laws and safe boating practices prior to getting on the water. Getting a weather forecast before leaving the dock and watching current conditions as they may develop will assist boaters in avoiding potentially dangerous situations.
9. Do not shoot fireworks or pyrotechnic devices from boats.

Watch the Missouri State Water Patrol homepage at www.mswp.state.mo.us for updates on Boating Safety Courses and News Releases in your area.

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